



NEWS RELEASE

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**NOVEMBER 25, 2002
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

OPERATION WEED AND SEED

INDEPENDENCE ORGANIZATIONS HONORED FOR FIGHTING CRIME, IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOODS

INDEPENDENCE, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, and Tracy Henke, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, recently honored several community organizations for their successful work fighting crime with Operation Weed and Seed.

On November 22, 2002, Henke presented 16 community organizations the Honor Award for Neighborhood Revitalization, from the Executive Office for Weed and Seed Coordination. The NorthWest Communities Development Corporation coordinates the Weed and Seed effort in Independence, with the assistance of 15 partner organizations.

Operation Weed and Seed is a federal program that aims to prevent, control and reduce violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity in targeted high-crime neighborhoods across the country. Weed and Seed sites range in size from several neighborhood blocks to 15 square miles. The United States Department of Justice launched the program in 1991, when 21 pilot sites across the nation were selected to implement the strategy, including Kansas City as one of the original sites. Currently there are approximately 300 sites officially recognized.

The Independence organizations have worked together in developing a Neighborhood Walk-Through program in which several teams go door-to-door to solicit input from residents about the area's safety and overall condition. Primary funding for the project and leadership comes from the Weed and Seed Program of the United States Department of Justice.

The United States Attorney's Office is included in the group of partners in Independence. However, Graves said credit for the program's outstanding success should be given to the local organizations. "You all are the ones that make this program work," Graves told representatives of

those organizations.

Organizations recognized for their achievement include NorthWest Communities Development Corp., Independence Police Department, United States Attorney's Office, Independence Code Enforcement Department, Independence Community Development Department, Independence Health Department, Independence Power and Light, Community Mediation Center, Hope House, Independence Animal Control, Jackson County Prosecutor's Office, Institute for Human Development, University of Missouri-Kansas City, Child Abuse Prevention Association, Missouri Division of Family Services, Missouri Gas Energy, Independence Fire Department and Van Horn Caring Community.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow